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SUBJECT: NORWAY'S MOD ON AFGHANISTAN DEVELOPMENTS

REF: A. OSLO 747
[1](#)B. OSLO 734
[1](#)C. SECSTATE 12322

Classified By: Ambassador Barry B. White for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a December 3 Bilateral Study Group meeting, Ministry of Defense Director of Security Policy Svein Efjestad focused on civilian coordination in Afghanistan, in particular UNAMA's key role, and said Norway's Minister of Defense would have to manage public expectations following President Obama's 2011 draw down date announcement. He announced that Norway will host an Afghanistan Regional Command-North (RC-North) conference in Oslo mid-January 2010 to discuss the way forward, including managing local power structures, defining targets, and preparations to transition security to Afghan forces. He noted Norway would not contribute an additional Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) but could divide the existing OMLT to provide garrison and air-based OMLTs. Norway hopes to get their Police Mentoring Team on the ground by early 2010, and expects to have their C130 in Afghanistan by early [1](#)2011. He recommended expanding Norway's Special Forces Crisis Response Unit (CRU) program in areas outside of Kabul, to ensure police receive the training and intelligence required to do their jobs. Efjestad said he had "some problems" with the Ministry of Finance regarding Afghanistan, but noted that overall the government and opposition parties in parliament remain committed to Norway's role. End Summary.

Participants

U.S.

Julianne Smith, Principal Director, European and NATO Policy, OSD
Christopher Skaluba, Director, European Policy, OSD
Col. Dave Schroeder, Country Director for Norway, OUSD (P)
Capt. Russell Smith, Defense Attach
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Norway

Svein Efjestad, Director of Security Policy, Ministry of Defense (MoD)
Arild Eikeland, Assistant Director General, Security Policy, MoD
Silje Solheim, Advisor and U.S. Desk Officer, MoD
Lt. Col Rune Jensen, U.S. Desk Officer, MoD
Keith Eikenes, Counselor, Embassy of Norway, Washington D.C.
Col. Ivar Halset, Operations Division, MoD Defense Staff
Kristin Rande, Senior Advisor, Mod Defense Staff
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Foreign Affairs

Reaction to Obama's Speech on Afghanistan

12. (C) Efjestad echoed Foreign Minister Stoere and other Norwegian government officials reaction to President Obama's December 1 speech (ref A) said that the focus should be on coordination of civilian efforts in Afghanistan, which, he said, remains a "delicate issue" in Europe. He acknowledged problems UNAMA has had in accomplishing its mission, but emphasized that there must be a UN stamp on the way forward, "to have the necessary legitimacy to attract donors." On working with President Karzai, he said the trick is to hold Karzai accountable and engage a strategy which keeps him dependent on the international community, not the other way around. On President Obama's call for a 2011 draw down if conditions permit, Efjestad said that Norway's Minister of Defense would likely find it challenging to manage public expectations for a mid-July 2011 deadline for withdrawal.

13. (C) Efjestad outlined the need for a provincial approach to address "underlying power structures," and to define ISAF's target; is it the Taliban, the "little-t taliban" drug lords, or informal power structures? He concluded that if our goal was to break down informal power structures, we wouldn't get very far. In Gormach (an RC-North district where Norway sees the heaviest fighting) clarification of who we are fighting is key to figuring out next steps, he said. Colonel Halset added that the Norwegians were fighting a

OSLO 00000764 002 OF 003

Pashtun group in the district who are routinely disenfranchised by the Uzbek majority in Faryab province. Addressing the issue of resource allocation and discrimination among the various groups operating in Faryab could help resolve some of the problems.

Norway to host RC-North Conference

14. (C) Efjestad said that Norway has invited Germany, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, and Hungary to attend an RC-North brainstorming conference on the way forward (Comment: Norway's MFA will be completing an internal review of its Afghanistan assistance at about the same time. End Comment.) Several districts are candidates for transfer of security, he said, and Norway is prepared to move to Phase 4 and transition security to Afghan control. Also up for discussion, he said, is the option of establishing a civilian coordinator for RC-North, who would then feed into a national level civilian coordinator, if such a position were to be established. OSD Principal Director for European and NATO Policy replied that an appropriate-level USG official may also be available to participate in the meeting.

15. (C) Acknowledging the focus of General McChrystal's strategy on southern and eastern Afghanistan, Efjestad said "Let's not take it too far," adding that some focus on the north would be required for Norway to transfer security to the Afghans. The Afghan government had previously planned to send an additional brigade north, he said, but instead sent the brigade south. Efjestad also brought up his concern about the possible role of militias, noting that Faryab's governor is discussing a militia option. Efjestad said he was skeptical, but the other option of having an overly large Afghan National Security Force would be "almost impossible" while using local forces would be less expensive and allow for deployment only when necessary. He concluded that Norway has no defined policy on the issue as of yet, but would be looking for a common view on the best way forward.

Norway's MoD contributions to Afghanistan

¶16. (C) Rather than outlining potential new contributions, Efjestad focused on splitting up the existing Norwegian OMLT to provide a garrison and an air-base OMLT to work with Afghan forces if they moved north. He said no new OMLT's otherwise could be provided. He turned to the work accomplished by Norway's Special Forces with the Crisis Response Unit (CRU) training in Kabul, saying that Norway would be interested in applying the CRU model outside of Kabul. Arming police with military training and access to intelligence so that they can take on drugs, gangs, and terrorists rather than being "sitting ducks" would be a positive step, he said. Efjestad also responded positively the option of replicating the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) in the north. Norway's Special Forces, which re-deployed in August 2009, would not be able to return to Afghanistan before 2011, he said. In regards to establishing a Police Mentoring Team (PMT), Efjestad said that it was difficult to recruit civilian police and that military police may have to fill the role. Efjestad said did not expect Norway's PMT to arrive in Afghanistan until early to mid-2010.

¶17. (C) Norway currently has three SP4-12 helicopters in Afghanistan for medical evacuation purposes, Efjestad said, adding that Norway's Minister of Defense had come under fire for allowing the helos to operate too far away from the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The helicopter's service in Afghanistan had also been extended several times, he noted, and while Norway has ordered new helos for a 2010 delivery date, they would be used to support Norway's frigates and not in Afghanistan. Norway is looking to extend the life of the existing helos, he said, using Swedish technicians and personnel support. Norway, Sweden, and Finland also cooperate by combining logistics and supply chains to reduce costs. Norway will deploy a C-130 March or April 2011, to address the security concerns of transporting Norwegians in country in unprotected aircraft. Government support for Afghanistan?

¶18. (C) Efjestad briefly mentioned problems with the Ministry of Finance in regards to funding current troop levels, quickly adding that Norway's future focus will be on training

OSLO 00000764 003 OF 003

and capacity building for the ANSF, which requires a different force structure anyway (Comment: Norway's 2010 defense budget, issued in October 2009, has a sentence noting that Norwegian infantry forces will be withdrawn by mid-2010.

In private and in public government officials, while acknowledging the budget's wording, have explained that Norway will remain in Afghanistan as long as NATO does. Regardless, the budget will need to be revised in early 2010 to ensure Norwegian forces have sufficient funds to maintain their goals in Afghanistan. This could be part of the problem Efjestad is referring to. End Comment).

¶19. (C) When asked about Norway's internal political debate on Afghanistan and how Norway's support for ISAF's mission would evolve over then next year, Efjestad described the balance between opposition parties in parliament, that would like to see increased troop levels and engagement in Afghanistan, and the government, which, while dedicated to the mission, internally struggles due to calls from the small but vocal Socialist Left (SV) party for Norway's withdrawal from Afghanistan. (Comment: opposition parties play a role in neutralizing SV's demands, given their strong position in parliament; they have 83 out of 160 seats in parliament, and their outspoken support for Norway's role in Afghanistan. End Comment.)

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